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Metaphor Translation From the Perspective of Conceptual Metaphor Theory: Based on the Analysis of Imagery“红酥手”in Song Ci

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Abstract

Metaphor can be considered as a figure of speech. Moreover, it also represents a human cognitive activity, manifesting its cultural information. Considerable imageries, which contains numerous metaphorical meanings, are existed in Chinese poetry, therefore, metaphor translation must be accurate, complete and expressive. Based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, this paper does an analysis of the imagery of plum dim sum in Lu You's poem: Phoenix Hairpin, probing into the meanings, including denotation and connotation of the imagery. Meanwhile, a translation strategy in poetic metaphor would be summarized.

Key words: Metaphor; Cultural information; Conceptual Metaphor Theory; Plum Dim sum; Translation strategy

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1. INTRODUCTION

The use of metaphors can be found everywhere, and literati often use the known and familiar things to create images and use them in poems to express their emotions.

The imagery of “红酥手” can be rarely found in Song Ci. It is undeniable that the similar language “红酥” appears in the Chinese poems, but its implication is not same with the meaning of “红酥手”. In fact, the imagery “红酥手” can solely be found in Lu You's poem through the inquiry of Song Ci, that is, *Phoenix Hairpin*. This paper analyzes the imagery “红酥手” on the basis of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and puts forward one translation strategy of metaphor.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The research history of metaphor has underwent a long-term and complicated process of development and transformation, from the perspective of rhetoric to the study of major disciplines. Aristotle, the first person who much more systematically studies metaphor, believes that metaphor is the usage to one thing of a name belonging to the other things. Based on the perspective of rhetoric, Aristotle defines metaphor and proposes this conception. The interpretation of metaphor is as follows in Webster's New World Dictionary (1979, p.1132): Metaphor is a figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another, different thing by being spoken of as if it were the other, implied comparison, in which a word or phrase ordinarily and primarily use of one thing is applied to another. Therefore, metaphor has been regarded as a linguistic phenomenon, and a content of rhetoric, a marginal discipline for a long time.

This situation has been broken since 1980 in that Lakoff and Johnson have clearly proposed Conceptual Metaphor Theory in their book *Metaphor Where We Live By*, shifting metaphor from the linguistic category to the thinking scope and interpreting metaphorical phenomena by terms, such as source domain, target domain, mapping, etc. Source domain can be considered as a metaphorical object, which would be concrete, while the target domain

as a noumenon, which is abstract (1980, pp.15-32). In addition, the correspondence between the two conceptual domains can be called mapping, and the cognitive way of interrelating different concepts is the cognition of metaphor. Since then, metaphor has become the spotlight of cognitive linguists.

On the basis of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Chinese scholars, such as Lin Shuwu, Hu Zhuanglin, and Shu Dingfang have put forward to their own views. As mentioned in *Study in Metaphor*, metaphor is not only a linguistic phenomenon, but a cognitive phenomenon of human beings. Metaphor is a cognitive way humans use their own experience in one field to understand and illustrate the experience of another (Shu, 2000, p.28). At the same time, it should be noted that conceptual metaphor could not be equivalent, in other words, several conceptual metaphors can be universal while some are special owing to the cultural specificity (Hu, 2004, p.86). The debate of the East and West wind can be regarded as a perfect instance to illustrate the speciality between Chinese and Western culture. Thanks to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, metaphor translation has become a major focus of metaphor research now.

3. “红酥手” AND ITS TRANSLATION RESEARCH

3.1. Study on the Meaning of “红酥手”

On the interpretation of the word “红酥手”, scholars have expressed their views: some people deem that is delicate and fine hands of Tang Wan, showing the scene that Tang Wan holds gold-branded wine and drinks with Lu You, some consider that is one kind of valuable dim sum in Shaoxing at that time, named by its shape, whose appearance is likened to the hands of Buddha, and the other insist that is a pork leg. The author believes that to understand the meaning of “红酥手”, the most significant thing is to probe into the creation of the poem.

First of all, on the book *Qi Jiu Xu Wen* written by Chen Hu, a scholar in South Song Dynasty, an extremely detailed record of the poem *Phoenix Hairpin* has been listed. He says that he has appreciated the poem with his own eyes when visiting Kuaiji (an alternative name of Shaoxing) at the age of twenty. In March, 1151, Lu You encountered his beloved ex-wife Tang Wan, cultured and fair. Tang Wan asked servants to give him “果饌” and gold-branded wine, in addition, their broken marriage is owing to his own mother, therefore, a myriad of thoughts and ideas full his mind and then he wrote down the poem (2012, p.127). This kind of historical record provides the poem's writing background. The word “遣” in the original text means “dispatch”, thus Lu You has no opportunity to drink with Tang Wan, that is to say, He could not see Tang Wan's hands at that time. It is

unreasonable that the “hands” comes from memory in that the nostalgia for women always stresses on face in ancient times. Additionally, the “果饌” generally refers to food, with no direct relation to “hands”.

Secondly, ancient literati rarely use “红酥手” as a description of woman's hand color, but the phrase, such as “素手” and “纤手”, which is in accordance with the ancient appreciation of hands: being fine and slender. Certainly, red can be used to describe a woman's hand, but this “red” is owing to experiencing too many hardships in their lives: Maybe it is injuries left by hard work due to the wind and rain, and maybe it is caused by frosty weather. However, Tang Wan's later husband Zhao Shicheng, an imperial clansman of the Southern Song, possessing both considerable power and numerous properties wouldn't pose her into those sufferings. What's more, this kind of red hand does not tally with the literary description for gorgeous women. Hence, Tang Wan's hands couldn't be like this red color. Thirdly, Lu You is good at exerting antithesis in poems, and this poem contains several antithetical parallelism, such as “东风恶” and “欢情薄”, “一杯愁绪” and “几年离索”, “春如旧” and “人空瘦”, and etc. The usage of antithesis with contrasting phrases and orderly form deepen poet's grudges and sorrows. Considering “红酥手” as hands of Tang Wan, particularly direct correlation lacks; while as food, gold-branded wine also belongs to food, so that the style and structure of the poem can be more complete, in addition to conforming to the poetic style of Lu You. On the basis of listed three reasons, “红酥手” should be a kind of food.

When it comes to the imagery “红酥手” is more likely to be a kind of dim sum or a pork leg, the author deems it's a pastry. Although scholars Peng Bolin (1990) and Liu Rujun (2002) have cited different literatures to prove that is actually a pig's feet, “酥” often refers to striffin made from milk or sheep's milk and its universal interpretations include cheese, wine, snacks, etc. Nevertheless, pork legs are not made from them, in other words, “酥” has no relativity with the material of pork legs. Furthermore, ancient literati pay much more attention to artistic conception. The use of pork leg mentioned from the beginning of a poem may expose slightly greasy feelings, making the lack of aesthetics, while using dim sum wouldn't affect the whole poem's beauty and reader's impression for the poem, so that very few literati are willing to write such greasy food into their sorrowful and regretful poem. Besides, in the Song Dynasty, people prefer to eat dim sum as a supplementary food when drinking.

Consequently, Having analyzed possibilities of the “红酥手”, the author believes that it is a kind of dim sum.

3.2 Metaphor “红酥手” and Translation Research

As mentioned that “酥” often refers to striffin made from milk or sheep's milk, and its technics is called

Dianshu, women usually take advantage of severe winter, slowly dripping the soft “酥” from their hands to form a variety of shapes in the constant and subtly dripping process (Yan, 2017, p.93), which is somewhat similar to the modern method that pastry chef uses cream to make different styles and shapes of cakes. This kind of crisp manufacturing is extraordinarily well-known in the Tang and Song dynasty, but a successful manufacturing is not easy: It requires makers to endure cold weather and be patient and concentrated, so that they can concentrate their clever thinkings on Diansu. Hence, the women who can do that are clever, and Tang Wan is one of them. There is no doubt that “酥” is white, but through reasonable dyes of flowers, the “酥” can be transformed into other colors. That is to say, the “红酥手” is a metaphorical expression, which contains two conceptual domains: On the one hand, it is made of crisps and dyed in red as a Buddha’s hand, and this is the target domain; on the other hand, Lu You wants to use it to appreciate intelligent and skillful Tang Wan, the woman who can do that complicated dim sum, and this is the source domain.

Many translators regard the imagery “红酥手” as a soft and slender hand with red color, thus they translate it as “pink hands” or “pink creamy hands”. However, those translations is caused by the misunderstanding of “红酥手”. It is the usage of metaphor that demands conveying its two-layer meanings. In fact, China adheres to the Anatman virtue of the universe, while the West adheres to the physical view, so that the Chinese and Western aesthetics present quite a few differences. For instance, Chinese Aesthetics devotes particular care to implicitness and euphemism, but the West advocates explicitation and perspicuity (Wang, 2006, p.61). Therefore, in consideration of the concept in China that indicating feelings and emotions with no direct language to pose readers appreciate information what is really hoped to transmit by themselves and the Western principle that texts should contains accurate expressions and clear language to help readers know contents and emotions after reading, the authorsupposes that “红酥手” should be translated into “plum dim sum” with a footnote: An elaborately handmade light refreshment with an absolutely complicated production process in the Song Dynasty.

Reasons about this translation would be as follows. “dim sum” refers to a Chinese dish or meal consisting of small pieces of food wrapped in sheets of dough. And the reason of using “plum” is closely related to the production of “红酥手”-- Women usually take advantage of chilly weather to slowly drip the soft “酥” from their hands to form pastry and dye by applying flower’s colors. In this case, “plum blossom” would be the most appropriate and its color coincides with the flowers used in dyeing. Meanwhile, Longman Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2014, p.1992) interprets

the color of “plum” being dark-red, which is closely linked to the “红” of the “红酥手”. Corresponding “红酥手” to “plum dim sum” straightforwardly manifests this pastry and explains that its production is not easy with the supplementary effect of footnotes, but more details, such as the shape of “红酥手”, production process, and intentions that the poet introduces this metaphor demand readers to seek. The translation method maintains a hazy and implicit image with a moderately explicit language. In addition, “plum dim sum” realizes the use of end rhyme, enhancing the readability of the poem.

4. A TRANSLATION STRATEGY IN POETIC METAPHOR

The most important thing for the translation of poetic metaphor is to maintain a hazy and implicit imagery with a moderately explicit language. In other words, the content of target domain should be explicitly translated, and the content of source domain should be hidden with a footnote as a supplement to enhance clarity of the explicit content and the specificity of the implicit content, so that the unspoken contents require more explorations and appreciations of readers. For instance, there is a verse in Su shi’s poem “竹杖芒鞋轻胜马”. Here “马” is a metaphor: Its target domain is a means of transportation: horses, while source domain stresses on an extravagant life enjoyed by prominent officials and eminent personages. From the background of that times, Su Shi was banished and lived a simple but more delighted life in Huangzhou, The author thinks it would be appropriate to translate “马” into “saddle” with a footnote: a strolling tool for riders, especially for the high officials and noble lords. The use of “saddle” clearly shows its function: a kind of transportation and preserves its metaphorical meaning with the footnote, knowing that it is used by powerful or rich family in an euphemistic way. But the reasons why they own “horse”, and the deep meaning of “horse” are supposed to ponder by readers. In summary, metaphor translation should balance the relationship between the use of explicit contents to achieve clarity and a basic preservation of deep meanings.

CONCLUSION

Combining the creation background and techniques of the poem, this paper discusses its original meaning and metaphoric meaning of “红酥手” based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and puts forward a translation strategy in poetic metaphor according to the translation of the imagery “红酥手”. Actually, as a metaphorical expression, “红酥手” includes two general domains: Target domain is a Chinese pastry made of crisps and dyed in red as a Buddha’s hand and source domain is clever and intelligent Tang Wan. It is because of the characteristics of poems

who express something with no quite straightforward language that metaphor translation need maintain a hazy and implicit imagery with moderately explicit language. Consequently, the author believes that literal translation with a footnote would be the most effective way at present. Target domain's contents should be explicitly described and source domain's should be hidden with a footnote as a supplement to enhance the clarity of the explicit contents and the specificity of the implicit contents. More details, that is to say, unspoken contents requires more appreciations from readers.

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